Cornell. A. E.

Gauging the minds of the blind.

LB1131
C

M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

c.1

LB1131
G
cop.1

46443-MIGEL-A

46443 - MIGEL-A

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND, INC.
RESEARCH DEPT.
LIBRARY

Apr - 1915.

GAUGING THE MINDS OF THE BLIND

By Arnold E. Cornell

BLIND! An appalling affliction for the seeing person to contemplate; an affliction that, in others, arouses pity in the heart of him whose own eyesight is unimpaired.

But is it proper to pity the blind? Would it not be more fitting to sympathize with the blind, and save pity for him whose affliction is an insurmountable obstacle? The latter is the blind man's view.

"In fitting the blind for the business of life, blindness is not so much the problem as is mentality. The mind is the vital thing. In fact, the mind is everything," said Robert Irwin, supervisor of the department for the blind in the Cleveland public schools, in speaking of educating the blind.

Mr. Irwin knows from his own experience what blindness means. Without eyesight he put himself through the University of Washington, at Seattle, where in 1906 he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Then, at Harvard University, he did research work in history and civil government for which he was awarded the degree of Master of Arts. Then he came to Cleveland as supervisor of the department for the blind, in the public schools. It was in this position that he arrived at the conclusion that the real problem of equipping the blind for a life of usefulness is largely a matter of knowing the mental capability of each pupil.

A "Normal" Blind Child Should Be Able to Recognize Various Objects by the Sense of Touch

"Blindness very often is a manifestation of a serious general physical disorder," says Mr. Irwin. "Parents are likely to attribute backwardness to blindness, when the real difficulty lies much deeper. Mentally defective seeing-pupils are readily recognized, and eventually the feeble-minded blind child is recognized as such; but the degree of the weakness is never proved. There are

RESEARCH DEPT. LIBRARY

schools for feeble-minded, seeing-children; but these are closed to mentally defective blind children, because the children are blind. The schools for the blind will not accept them, because they are mentally defective. Consequently, they go to the public schools, where they retard the normal pupils. Thus the public greatly increases the evil effects of blindness."

With the desire to correct this condition, at the close of the school year in June, 1914, Mr. Irwin went to Dr. H. H. Goddard, of the psychological research department of the Training School at Vineland, New Jersey, where exhaustive work in examining the mentality of feeble-minded children has been done, to study the methods used there. He learned there were numerous tests for seeing-children, to which the institution confines itself, but none for the blind; so he set out to adapt the tests to the needs of the educator of the blind.

PHOTO—UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD

THE BLIND ARE NOT EVEN BARRED FROM MANY SPORTS
E. E. Marschman, who made the highest score in a bowling tournament held recently, by the Association for the Blind, in New York City.

The tests were those devised, after years of experimenting, by Alfred Binet, a French psychologist. The Binet tests consist of a series of examinations that the child of average normal intelligence should be able to pass. Natural intelligence, as opposed to training, is the basis of these tests, and observation is more frequently depended upon than anything else. It is the latter that makes the Binet tests impossible for use among the blind.

Mr. Irwin spent two months at Vineland studying and applying the Binet tests to seeing-children in the clinical psychological laboratory. Those parts of the Binet method that depend upon memory and reasoning alone, such as repeating sentences or series of numbers, defining words, and the differences between objects that a blind child could feel, he left unchanged in devising his system. The normal child of three should be able, upon request, to point to his nose, eyes, and mouth; repeat after the ex-

aminer, "It rains", "I am hungry", two numbers—as 7 and 2—and should know his name. This much was retained from the Binet system.

But the Binet examinations include tests of judgment based on a child's ability to tell which of two lines is the longer, reproducing squares, copying short, written sentences, describing action as portrayed in pictures, memory tests, requiring the child to run errands, and tests of æsthetic sense as shown by the selection of the prettiest profile from among a number of outlined women's faces printed on a large card. For all these he devised substitutes that a blind child could comprehend, such as requiring the child to recognize the objects in a basket filled with such things as a doll, spool, spoon, baby's shoe, cent, key, pocket knife, button, and a watch.

Equipped with his adapted system, he left Vineland for New York. At the Sunshine Home for Blind Babies, in Brooklyn, and the Arthur Home for Blind Babies, in Summit, New Jersey, he applied the Binet-Irwin tests for the blind to fifty small children.

Among the younger children the Binet-Irwin tests were efficient; but as the older children were examined it was discovered that some of the tests failed to produce the desired results, and that a blind child, though lacking vision, was more advanced in some respects than a seeing-child. It was found that a seven-year old blind child can repeat a sentence that a seeing-child cannot repeat until he is eight.

MR. ROBERT IRWIN PUTTING TEST QUESTIONS TO A BLIND BOY
The interrogator, who is himself blind, records the results by punching dots in paper.

"The records of fifty applications of the tests do no more than establish a working basis", Mr. Irwin said. "When we have records of three or four hundred tests, we shall know pretty near how much an average, normal blind child of a given age should know. Until we

have our facts thoroughly verified, however, we shall not be able positively to assert to what degree a blind child is normal or to what degree feeble-minded.

"It is an accepted fact that a seeing-person with the mentality of a normal twelve-year-old child can earn a living, and we assume that a blind child of the same mental age can be made self-supporting. Once we are able positively to determine a blind child's mental age, we shall be able to segregate those of low mentality in schools and institutions, as is done with seeing-children. Although there are now no special schools for the mentally defective blind, when the need of such institutions is recognized, they will be provided by the State, or otherwise. The tests will also be most valuable in classifying the adult blind, who now are thrown upon the world indiscriminately.

"The tests will effect a great saving of both money and labor in educational work. It is useless to try to give a person with a seven-year-old mind book learning, or to teach how to read by raised letters, because such a person would be reading without the mind. Such a person, however, can be trained to do many things that will be useful to himself and to those who are charged with his care. Then there are those of higher mentality who may be taught to be partially self-supporting, and a great many who may be educated to a degree that will make them not only self-supporting but also useful members of society. These must not be retarded by the mentally defective, who number ten per cent of the pupils in the blind departments of our public schools.

Since it has become known that Mr. Irwin has succeeded in adapting the Binet tests to the blind, trained psychologists who have had experience with the Binet system have offered their aid in collecting clinical data. Miss Elizabeth S. Kite, of the extension department of the Training School at Vineland, New Jersey, has undertaken clinical work in Eastern New York, Eastern Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Miss Catherine Matthews, formerly Binet tester for the State of Utah, and now a graduate student in psychology at Pittsburgh University, has arranged to examine the children at the Western Pennsylvania Institute for the Blind. Mr. S. C. Kohse, who formerly was employed by the United States immigration bureau to detect and test mentally defective immigrants at Ellis Island, and who now is head of the vocational guidance department of the city of Chicago, will test the blind children in the Chicago public schools.

Expert clinical psychologists of several institutions for the blind, from Montana to the Atlantic Coast, have written Mr. Irwin for information and charts. Correspondence is being exchanged and by the time this article is published, it is probable the Binet-Irwin tests for the blind will also be in use in Cincinnati, Columbus, St. Louis, and in blind schools in many States. Only one requirement is imposed by Mr. Irwin in allowing the use of his system, and that is a complete detailed report of each case. By spring, he hopes to have records of three or four hundred scientifically accurate tests, from which absolutely to correlate the mentality of blind children from three to twelve years of age.

Higher food prices are increasing the city man's respect for the soil. In the Northwest, there is a farm of twenty acres which will net a revenue of nine thousand dollars. This remarkable result comes from the proper application of energy and gray matter. TECHNICAL WORLD for May will tell you how this result was obtained.

Photomount
Pamphlet
Binder
Gaylord Bros. Inc.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN 21, 1908